



Living Healthy Working Well

Make Diversity a Part of Your Life

We're often told that in order to have a strong financial outlook, we should diversify our investments. Consider applying that philosophy to your daily routine and see what diversifying your life can do for your emotional outlook. Diversity is more than a workplace policy. It's a practice that can be incorporated into your personal life with enjoyable rewards! As an added benefit, being open to meeting new people and having new experiences can help lower the anxiety and stress levels you may feel when placed in an unfamiliar situation. Not sure how to start? Here are a few suggestions.

Say yes to new things

When someone invites you to a play, movie, or an event that you normally wouldn't attend, say yes. How do you know you won't like foreign films if you've never seen one? How do you know you won't enjoy an opera if you've never heard one? Try something at least once, better yet twice. Learning about other cultures through experiences is a great way to make an effort towards diversity.

Volunteer

Many different organizations could use your help. You can read to the blind, tutor a child, or help a shelter that serves the homeless. Interacting with persons different from yourself is a great way to broaden your perspective. Having personal

experiences with those of other races or cultures may help negate myths, stereotypes, or fears. Volunteering is a wonderful way to enrich your life, while helping an organization in need.

Tempt your palate

Food is a wonderful way to be exposed to other cultures and ethnicities. Besides Italian or Chinese, consider trying an Ethiopian, Thai, or Hungarian restaurant. It's a great way to open up to other parts of the world. If you find yourself really enjoying food from a particular country, take it a step further and learn more about the culture itself. It could be the start of a great experience and bring another culture even closer.

Take an ethnic studies class

If there's a particular culture that you've always been interested in, an adult education class could be for you. Local community colleges offer a variety of courses from African American Literature to Chinese Religions. You can expand your horizons, meet new people, and learn something all at the same time.

Having a lifestyle that's filled with diversity allows you to be more flexible and open to change. Meeting new people with new ideas becomes something that makes life interesting, instead of something to dread. If you want information on ways to make diversity part of your life, call your Employee Assistance Program. Think of it as an investment in yourself. Your life will be richer and more fulfilling because of it.

Teaching Children about Diversity

As society becomes more diverse, parents have a greater responsibility to discuss and explore issues such as race and disability with their children. Not only should children understand and appreciate those who are different from them, they should also learn to respect them. The following are some ideas to introduce diversity to children.

Broaden their circle of friends

Encourage children to develop friendships and engage in activities with children who may look or talk differently than them. Children should learn that even if someone doesn't act like they do, they may still have a lot in common and can share the same feelings, ideas, and interests.

Encourage diverse activities

Activities are a great way to introduce your child to different cultures. Visit museums with exhibits from different regions of the world. Attend performances that reflect different cultures. Sports, such as karate or soccer, can also provide a gateway of learning about diversity.

Make diverse choices

Let your child's playroom be a window to the world. Choose books, toys and games that introduce your child to different cultures and races. For example, there are many children's books illustrating African, Native and Asian Americans as main characters. Making diverse selections for your child will help them explore diversity in the security of their own home.

Address questions honestly

Children are constantly learning about our world. It is common for a child to ask, "why does that person look like that?" or "why is that person in a wheelchair?" These can be difficult questions for parents to answer, especially if they are unsure of the answers themselves. It is important for parents to be honest with children. If you do not know the answer, admit it to your child, and then go find out the answer together. This teaches children to be educated and respectful of the world they live in.

Giving children the tools that they need to become open-minded, accepting individuals is important to their success as adults. Good communication between child and parent is essential. For information on talking to your children about important issues such as diversity, call your EAP.

Remember . . .

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to you and your eligible dependents. EAP counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to discuss your concerns and provide confidential assistance at no cost to you. Just call us at 1-800-6-EAP-4-CA (1-800-632-7422). If you are using a TTY, please call 1-800-542-2833.

You can also access the EAP newsletter on the Internet. Just go to the following address: <http://www.dpa.ca.gov/benefits/other/eap/news/wrkgwell.htm>



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